



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Robert R. Attebury

An Iraqi man stands with his son as he shows his ink-stained finger after voting in Kharma, Iraq, Oct. 15 during the Iraqi referendum election.

Rice, Khalilzad: Iraqis win, no matter referendum results

By Petty Officer 3rd Class John R. Guardiano
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Officials are counting the votes in Iraq's historic constitutional referendum, and people are asking whether the people of Iraq have accepted or rejected their new constitution.

But to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad, the results of

Saturday's referendum are less important than the fact that Iraq had a highly successful and relatively peaceful election in which the Sunnis participated in very large numbers.

"Whatever happens with the referendum ... the Iraqi people clearly are taking advantage of the political process to make their views known, and that's bad news for the terrorists," Rice told Chris Wallace on Fox News Sunday.

Appearing on ABC News' This Week with George Stephanopoulos, Khalilzad agreed: "If the constitution

passes," he said, "there is a path for additional changes. If the constitution does not pass — because of the opposition from the Sunni voters — it would show that their participation in the process did, indeed, make a difference.

"Either way, there will be additional opportunities for change — for a political way forward for Iraq."

Khalilzad also appeared on CNN's Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer; Rice on NBC News' Meet the Press with Tim

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Iraqi voting strikes blow for freedom, Bush says

By Petty Officer 3rd Class John R. Guardiano
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — The millions of Iraqis who voted in their country’s landmark Oct. 15 constitutional referendum have dealt a catastrophic blow to the worldwide al Qaeda terrorist network, which would like to subjugate them and the entire Middle East to a jihadist, terrorist tyranny, President Bush said Saturday in his weekly radio address.

“By casting their ballots,” Bush said, “the Iraqi people deal a severe blow to the terrorists and send a clear message to the world: Iraqis will decide the future of their country through peaceful elections, not violent insurgency. ...

“The terrorists,” he added, “understand that the act of voting is a rejection of them and their distorted vision of Islam. Simply by coming out to vote, the Iraqi people have shown that they want to live in freedom, and they will not accept a return to tyranny and terror.”

Bush said a recently intercepted terrorist letter shows that Iraqi political progress is stymieing al Qaeda’s quest for a “totalitarian empire that denies political and religious freedom.

“These terrorists are driven by an ideology that exploits Islam to serve a violent political vision,” he said. But with each step that the Iraqi people take on the march toward democracy, “al Qaeda’s vision for the region becomes more remote.”

The intercepted terrorist letter was written from al Qaeda’s number two leader, Ayman al Zawahiri, to his chief deputy in Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Zawahiri describes Iraq precisely as “the place for the greatest battle” of our day, Bush said.

“The jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals,” Zawahiri wrote. “Expel the Americans from Iraq. ... Establish an Islamic authority ... to spread its power in Iraq ... [and] extend the jihad wave” to nearby, neighboring countries.

Bush said “this letter shows that al Qaeda intends to make Iraq a terrorist haven and a staging ground for attacks against other nations, including the United States.”

However, he added, “the letter makes equally clear that the terrorists have a problem: Their campaign of murder and mayhem is turning the [Iraqi] people against them.”

Indeed, “many of your [Zarqawi’s] Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia,” Zawahiri says.

“Even al Qaeda,” Bush noted, “recognizes that with every random bombing and every funeral of a child, the Muslim world sees the terrorists for what they really are: murderers at war with the Iraqi people.”

According to the president, the terrorists hope to break America’s will and force the United States to retreat from Iraq. That is why, he said, Zawahiri’s letter “points to Vietnam as a model ... Al Qaeda believes that Americans can be made to run again.”

Bush said, the terrorists “are gravely mistaken. America will not run, and we will not forget our responsibilities.” The President said with pride that the United States brought down Saddam Hussein’s murderous regime, while supporting Iraq’s march toward democracy, free and fair elections.

A free Iraq “will be an ally in the war on terror, and a partner for peace and moderation in the Muslim world.” Bush said. This, in turn, will make America’s children and grandchildren safer and more secure, he added.

Identity theft a problem for deployed service members

By Maj. Patricia C. Anderson
Command Information Chief

Service members on active duty who are deployed away from their normal duty station can place an “active duty alert” on their credit reports to help reduce the threat of identity theft. An active duty alert stays on a credit report for one year, unless the service member requests a renewal for a longer time.

If a business sees the alert on a credit report, it must verify your identity before issuing credit, so it could delay opening new accounts, if you want or need to do so. You will also be removed from the credit reporting companies’ marketing list for pre-screened credit card offers for two years unless you ask to be added before then.

To request an alert, contact any one of the three consumer reporting agencies, and it must share that alert with the other two:

Equifax: 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com; P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241

Experian: 1-888-EXPERIAN ; www.experian.com; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013

TransUnion: 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com; Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790

For more information, log on to the Federal Trade Commission’s Web site at <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>.



U.S. Navy Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Alan D. Monyelle

An Iraqi Solider proudly displays his stamp after voting on the draft constitution in the country’s national referendum, Tall Afar, Iraq, Oct. 15.

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Russert. Both officials agreed that the primacy of the political process — and ordinary Iraqis’ embrace of that process in yesterday’s referendum — is a death blow to the terrorists who are killing scores of innocent Iraqis.

“The Iraqi people are casting their lot with the political process,” Rice told Russert. “That will sap the energy from this insurgency, because an insurgency cannot ultimately survive without a political base.”

Khalilzad said success lies in “continuous Sunni participation in the political process” and continued isolation and defeat of the terrorists. “That’s the recipe, the plan if you’d like, for success,” he said. “I think we are making good progress. Yesterday was a good indication that our approach to the Sunnis is producing results.”

Rice said that analysis of the voting

is now underway, but that preliminary findings suggest that as many as a million more people voted this time than in January. “The numbers in the Sunni areas are very high,” she said. “The Sunnis turned out in very large numbers. That means they’re casting their lot now with the democratic process.”

Rice and Khalilzad acknowledged the dramatically-reduced level of violence and attributed this to excellent preparation and work by Iraq’s Security Forces.

“The Iraqi [Security] Forces performed very well in protecting the election process,” Rice said. They’re “growing in stature in the eyes of the people of Iraq.”

Saturday’s referendum, Khalilzad added, shows “that violence is not the way to deal with problems. [It shows] that violence is a dead-end street.”

For that reason, Rice said, terrorists and terrorist sympathizers in Iraq are few in number. They do not in any way constitute a majority of the population. “Indeed, some of them,” she

observed, “are foreigners like those who work for [Abu Musab al] Zarqawi.”

Rice said many of these foreign terrorists and jihadists are coming to Iraq through Syria — and they are not simply sneaking across, unobserved, from the Syrian-Iraq border.

“In many cases,” Rice said, “they [foreign terrorists] are coming [to Iraq] through Damascus Airport ... [Syrian] territory,” she said, “is being used to kill innocent Iraqis — innocent men, women and children — because suicide bombers are coming through there.”

The Syrian government, “is permitting the use of Syrian territory for terrorists to cross Syrian territory. She said the United States and Iraq will address this issue “in a multilateral fashion ... [to] get the Syrian regime to change its behavior.”

As for the formal results of yesterday’s referendum, Khalilzad said “we will know late tomorrow... [but] yesterday was a great day for Iraq.”

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PERSPECTIVES

One giant leap for mankind starts with our *own* two feet

By Sgt. Misha King
Scimitar Editor

Ask someone what the scariest movie he or she has ever seen, and you'll probably get responses like "Poltergeist," "The Exorcist," "Nightmare on Elm Street," "Friday the 13th" and "Halloween." When I was a kid, no doubt Michael Myers had a lot to do with my nightmares. That was then. Now, I'd have to say the scariest movie I've ever seen is "The Day After Tomorrow." No, there weren't any "boom-boom" men running around killing people, nor were there zombies or possessed Catholics seeking redemption. But the idea of the Northern Hemisphere going through an unforeseen Ice Age is much scarier than any Jason flick I've seen. Why? Because it's more *realistic*.

Sure, "The Day After Tomorrow" is a Hollywood hit that grossed more than \$143 million over the three-day weekend it was released last Memorial Day. But the movie's plot is based on natural disasters that could actually happen, as opposed to upheavals caused by some fictional goon.

In the movie, snowstorms blanketed New Delhi, tornadoes destroyed Los Angeles, baseball-sized hail bombarded Tokyo, and a massive tidal wave engulfed New York — all results of abrupt climate shifts caused by extreme global warming. Sounds really far-fetched, right? Not exactly.

According to the National Climatic Data Center's Web site, "the paleoclimate record shows rapid and dramatic changes in climate have occurred in the past on global and regional scales." And according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Web site, which attributes the National Academy of Sciences, "the earth's surface temperature has risen about one degree Fahrenheit in the past century, with accelerated warming during the past two decades. There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities."

Some impacts of global warming are already happening, such as ocean heat content increases and snow covering and ice extent decreases, which threaten to flood islands and coastal regions worldwide, according to the National Environmental Trust's Web site. Furthermore, future predicted impacts include increased floods, increased spread of infectious diseases, degraded water quality and abrupt climate changes. I'm not a scientist by any stretch, but these predictions sound like they've started coming true over the past few years and getting worse: the tsunami last year, the countless hurricanes hitting the U.S., the Gulf Coast in

particular, monstrous fires caused by extended droughts and the bird flu epidemic that started in Asia and has already made its way to Romania. According to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt, the likelihood of a human flu pandemic is very high. And let's not forget the devastating earthquake that shook Pakistan, India and Afghanistan just recently; although I didn't feel the aftereffects physically here in Iraq, I felt them emotionally; yet another 40,000 dead from a natural disaster. It seems like every day you turn on the television, there's a new tragedy somewhere in the world.

So what does this mean for you and me? What can we do to help preserve our earth so our future generations have clean water to drink, clean oxygen to breathe and "clean" food to eat? Just like any movement in history, it has to start somewhere. Progress takes time. And like the slogan about the lottery, "You have to be in it to win it." The same principles apply here: it all starts with the individual.

According to www.earth911.org, only about 50 percent of aluminum cans produced are recycled, and 54 billion cans were recycled last year. This saved energy equivalent to 15 million barrels of crude oil — America's entire gas consumption for one day. Did you know that recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to burn a 100-watt bulb for almost four hours or run your television for three hours?

There are endless other ways to help preserve our environment, such as recycling glass and paper, using water efficiently (fixing a leaky faucet can save hundreds of gallons of wasted water) and cutting down on power usage, just to name a few. I didn't realize how much I took clean water for granted until I came to Iraq and saw how scarce it is. Furthermore, we Americans like to drive big, gas-guzzling vehicles; not only is this costly to our wallets, it's even costlier to our environment. As I cited above, we use about 15 million barrels of crude oil a day. If we invested in more fuel-efficient cars, made more use of public transportation and car pools, we could make a significant difference in preserving our precious world.

Yes, earth will eventually cease to exist once our sun burns out millions of years from now, but if we don't invest in home improvement, so to speak, it will deteriorate beyond repair a lot sooner than that. Maybe colonizing the moon isn't such a stretch after all.

One giant leap for mankind starts with our own two feet. Although they may look like baby steps in what seems like an endless road march, they're steps nonetheless. Millions of baby steps will surely add up to giant leaps for mankind.

Scimitar Pulse

What do you think can be done to help preserve the earth's environment?

"We need to work on recycling in third-world countries."

Mudhefar Al-Jabur
Iraq Reconstruction Management Office



"Concentrate on improving the air and water quality."

Army Maj. Larry Chinnery
Multi-National Force - Iraq



"Watch what we throw away."

Army Spc. Lance Hagan
151st Field Artillery



"Pick up after yourself."

Army Col. Sylvia Moran
Special Operations



"Stop dumping hazardous waste."

Army Spc. Thomas Balestrieri
3153rd Finance Battalion



"Mandatory recycling programs."

Army Capt. Jennifer Powell
212th Field Artillery Brigade



"Imposing an environmental luxury tax on SUVs."

Army Capt. Yolanda Schillinger
Joint Area Support Group - Central



MRE for me?

An Iraqi child holds a Meal Ready-to-Eat given to him by U.S. Soldiers in Mosul, Iraq.

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. James L. Harper Jr.

Logistics Marines deliver more than 'the goods'

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Wayne Edmiston
2nd Force Service Support Group

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq — "Mount up!" said a Marine at the front of the convoy.

The Marines hopped into their vehicles and began their long haul on the road, delivering supplies to Marines throughout Iraq.



A Marine prepares his M2 .50-caliber machine gun before pulling out on convoy.

These Marines did not see the inside of their tents until their mission was complete — a task that had no definitive timeline. These "Road Warriors" are the Marine Corps' source of life-sustaining supplies in Iraq. They run the convoys of Combat Logistics Regiment 25, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward).

The amount of uncertainty these Marines face on the road ahead of them is something to which they have become accustomed, said Pfc. Juan Delacruz, a motor transportation operator with CLR/25 and San Diego native.

These Marines never know what may strike their path, whether it is an improvised explosive device, mechanical problems or civilian vehicles trying to enter their convoy.

"The convoys are a lot more dangerous out here because we are a big target," said 1st Lt. Ramiro DeAnda, a convoy commander with CLR/25. "All you can really do is react."

Even though they experience the unexpected, a lot of planning goes into the conveying process. It took CLR/25 six to seven months of training and planning that completely revolved around convoy operations to prepare for their deployment to Iraq.

DeAnda admits the majority of training takes place on the road.

"It is kind of like 'on-the-job' training," the El Paso, Texas, native explained. "You can prepare all you want, but once you are really doing it, that is when you really get the hang of it."

On the road, it is the split-second changes



Cpl. Jeysson W. Ramos mounts his M-249 squad automatic weapon to provide security for his convoy. Ramos is a field radio operator with CLR/25.

that make the difference in the safety of the convoy.

"It's like playing chess all night," said DeAnda. "I am always thinking three moves ahead and at the same time worrying about what I'm doing right now."



Cpl. Brandon G. Laws provides security for a convoy out on the road.

The danger also culminates with the stress of being on the road for extremely long periods of time. Some of these Marines are on the road for extended periods of time, traveling from forward operating base to forward operating base delivering supplies to

each command, said Cpl. Brandon G. Laws, a motor transportation operator with CLR/25 and Houston native.

"Without motor [transportation], the FOBs wouldn't get hooked up with food, water, supplies and Marines," Laws said. "I believe it's an important part of the Marine Corps."

The junior Marines are the ones who make up the majority of the drivers and gunners on the convoys and are complimented by their superiors for how well they operate under these conditions.

Most of these Marines have been to Iraq multiple times and know their job inside and out, said Laws.

"They are doing an outstanding job," DeAnda said. "They are motivated and never complain. They do their job to the best of their ability."

Proud to serve: Michigan Marine continues family's military service tradition



Cpl. Mickey Lovy, supply noncommissioned officer in the logistics department of Marine Wing Support Group 27, prepares a supply requisition.

Story and photo by Sgt. Juan Vara
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

AL ASAD, Iraq — Military service has been a family tradition ever since Cpl. Mickey Lovy's grandfather immigrated to the United States from Hungary. His grandfather served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and his father was a U.S. Army doctor during the Vietnam War.

Lovy, the supply noncommissioned officer in the logistics department of Marine Wing Support Group 27, picked a different service, but he is keeping the tradition alive.

Lovy, a graduate of Holly High School in his hometown Holly, Mich., joined the U.S. Marine Corps in September 2002. "After high school I worked odd jobs until I realized I needed a change and went full blast into it," he said. "I decided to go for the real deal and join the Marine Corps."

As the unit's supply NCO, his duties include ordering supplies for the squadrons in the group, dispersing the supplies and staying in contact with supply representatives in the squadrons here and at Al Taqaddum to let them know their supplies are on the way or already here.

"I make sure that supplies the squadrons order from the United States get to them in a timely manner," he said. "I also check the reports that state what gear the squadrons have, so I can figure out what they need. My job is to check the reports for inconsistencies and make sure they get the gear they rate."

Lovy orders everything from insect repellent to shields for gunner stations on the Humvees that units in the group use for convoy operations throughout the Al Anbar province. Though he served in Okinawa, Japan, for a year until March 2004 before reporting to MWSG-27 in Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, N.C., this is his first deployment in sup-

port of real-world operations.

"I joined the Marine Corps to make my family proud," he said. "I wanted my life to go in a different positive direction, and I knew the Marine Corps was the most extreme change I could do for the better."

Lovy said out of his parents' seven offspring, he is the youngest and only to join the military. He said that his father, who left the Army's 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) as a captain after serving in Vietnam, is proud of him regardless of having joined a different service.

"The Marine Corps is not only associated with being an elite military service, it's also associated with values, honor and a level of discipline the other branches don't really offer," he said. "The Corps has done nothing but better me. It helped me keep my good attributes and added and built on them. The leadership and mentors I've run into in the Corps have definitely made it worth it."

Big 'buffalo' roams, guards military supply routes

Story and photos by Pfc. Matthew Clifton
Multi-National Corps - Iraq Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, BAGHDAD — Most combat units in Iraq know all too well the threat posed by improvised explosive devices and take direct measures to avoid contact with such deadly adversaries, but with the help of the Buffalo, one platoon is actively engaging the IED threat.

"The Buffalo is a South African armored personnel carrier designed with anti-land mine capabilities," said 2nd Lt. Brian James Duncan, platoon leader, 2nd Platoon, Company C, 612th Engineer Battalion, Ohio Army National Guard. "In South Africa, they have huge problems with land mines on dirt roads."

The Buffalos are designed for navigation on rough or "difficult to negotiate" terrain and are very similar to Bradley fighting vehicles with the exception of a few components and abilities. Since the Buffalo is designed for land mines, it is also useful for IEDs, Duncan said.

One of the most significant features on the Buffalo is a retractable steel arm used for moving obstructions from roads.

"We put a large retractable arm on the Buffalo that is used to interrogate and identify possible IEDs," Duncan said. "This is

not a capability we have had before, so we use that piece of equipment to our full advantage."

The arm is similar to that of a bulldozer's — a little smaller, but just as durable. The end of the arm is double-sided. One side has a forked tool that is used to move objects from the road, and the other has a single spike used to poke and prod suspicious-looking items, Duncan said.

IEDs can be disguised as normal-looking garbage on the street or street side. A tire, cardboard box or burlap sack are all things that could be possible IEDs. After those items have been inspected by the Buffalo and presumed "clear," the Buffalo's arm will move them to the side of the road or position them in such a way that other patrols can see they pose no threat, Duncan said.

"If there is no threat, we clear the object and drive on," said Duncan. "But, if we can confirm the presence of an IED, we call explosive ordnance disposal. They come and eliminate the threat."

The Buffalo's arm is maneuvered by a remote control located inside the body of the vehicle.

"The controls are designed to be easily operated," said Spc. Kenneth Edmonson, radio operator, 2nd Plt. "After working with the controls for just a few minutes, I easily got the hang of it."

"The Buffalo's arm has a 16-foot reach, which contributes to a lowered risk of damage in the event of an IED detonating," Duncan said. "Everything about the Buffalo is designed to protect against explosions."

The body of the Buffalo has a distinct V-shape, which allows for a minimal risk of damage if an IED should go off. The body sits high off of the ground, also providing significant protection.

"Thanks to the design of the hull along with the armored capabilities of the Buffalo, all insurgent attempts to damage this vehicle have been unsuccessful," Duncan continued.



"The Buffalo is a vital asset to our mission because of all the IEDs we have encountered," Duncan said. "Even though we have casualties that result from small arms fire, the majority of injuries and even deaths come from IEDs."

IEDs can be used against any unit in the field, even the ones who are equipped to search out and identify them, Duncan added.

"We have had about six IEDs go off on us, and two or three of them even were as close as three feet away from the Buffalo," Duncan said. "Thanks to the design and abilities of the Buffalo's armor, there were no casualties, and the only damage done was a busted tire."

If those Soldiers had been in any other vehicle they could have possibly been killed, Duncan continued.

"If we didn't have the Buffalo or that type of armored equipment we wouldn't find as many IEDs, and a lot of the stuff we move off of the road, in turn is not mistaken by other units as IEDs," Duncan explained.

It is also important to minimize the number of times EOD has to respond to false positives. There are only so many EOD Soldiers available, and if they have to respond to 30 calls a day and only six of them are actual IEDs, a lot of time is wasted, Duncan said.

"We have the ability to confirm what is and is not an IED," Duncan continued. "Therefore we can make sure EOD is in the right place at the right time."

There are quite a few "Iron Claw" units in Baghdad, who search the major and secondary military supply routes with their own Buffalos.

"Could you still find the IEDs without the Buffalo? Yes," Duncan said. "But these vehicles keep Soldiers out of harm's way, and most importantly, the Buffalo keeps Soldiers from getting killed."

"We have never had a Soldier killed or wounded inside a Buffalo," Duncan continued. "The biggest problem we have ever had is replacing a tire, and that's a lot easier than replacing a Soldier."



Sgt. Willy Sobczak, combat engineer, 2nd Plt., C Co., 612th Eng. Bn., Ohio Army National Guard, uses a remote control to maneuver the retractable arm on the Buffalo armored personnel carrier.

American female officers take on task of training Iraqi Soldiers

By Chrissy Zdrakas
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — In a culture where women traditionally stay home and men take care of business, two female officers from Robins AFB found that some customs are changing.

The two women from Robins' 78th Security Forces Squadron are part of an Air Force military training team helping train Iraqi noncommissioned officers.

Maj. Michelle Stringer and 1st Lt. Sarah Parris work at Camp Ur, about 180 miles southeast of Baghdad, right outside the city of Tallil. The camp, which is just more than a year old, has a name straight out of antiquity. Ur is the birthplace of the biblical patriarch Abraham. Its ziggurat, or temple tower, is among the country's best preserved.

The contrast of the old and the new is not lost on the two officers. Neither is their role as instructors.

"It's very interesting," said Stringer, who is from Woodbridge, Va. "In spite of the departure from the roles of women in their culture, the Iraqis seem eager to listen and learn."

Still, the major said she is very conscious of how Iraqi men regard women, especially when it is time to make decisions. She is careful not to forget traditions.

"I always have a male sergeant major 'make' the decision because I don't want the Soldiers to suffer any backlash or shame because they took orders from a woman — or worse — were corrected by a woman," she said.

While making sure not to offend, the women still have an important mission to accomplish. Officially, they are in Iraq to train, coach, advise and mentor Iraqi Soldiers. But in practice, they have become much more — cheerleaders, morale boosters and troubleshooters.

"There were 700 of them and four of us," Stringer said. That makes for what she described as an "interesting and intensely challenging assignment." The 700 Soldiers from the first two groups they trained are now operational.

Some of the trainees served in the military under the Saddam Hussein regime, where noncommissioned officers had little authority.

"We're showing them they can take charge — they can make things happen," Stringer said.

But the major said the students do not think about tomorrow and the challenges it might

bring. To overcome that, the instructors do not tell students how to solve problems.

"We give them a bunch of options and ask 'which would work best for you?' It's all part of getting them to think for themselves," she said.

"Because in their old military, they couldn't make decisions," she said. "Officers led; they followed."

While they might be making strides in training, introducing the concept of democracy — and getting the Soldiers to make decisions — has not been easy.

"This is unlike anything I have ever done before," Stringer said. "We're trying to introduce democracy here, and that will require the ability to make decisions."

To help the students make the transition from followers to leaders, the instructors must be sensitive to ordeals the students had to go through. They already know what they are supposed to do, the major said.

"These guys are pumped," Stringer said. "They're excited — ready to get to work. We give them a speech telling them how important their job is. In a sense, we stroke their egos and work on keeping them interested in the work."

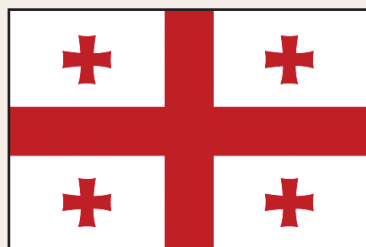


U.S. Air Force photo

Maj. Michelle Stringer (left) and 1st Lt. Sarah Parris train Iraqi troops at this austere camp. Both are deployed here from the 78th Security Forces Squadron, Robins Air Force Base, Ga.

Coalition Corner

... highlighting countries
serving with MNF-Iraq



Georgia

local name: *Sak'art'velo*

Georgia is located in Southwest Asia, although it has also been described as part of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East. It borders the Black Sea, Turkey and Russia, and it is slightly smaller than South Carolina. Georgian is the official language for the 4.7 million people living here, although Russian, Armenian, and Azeri are also spoken in various areas. The Georgian currency system is the Lari.

Georgia has a very rich history dating back over 3,000 years ago to the ancient kingdoms of Colchis and Kartli-Iberia. Many of its cities are endowed with castles, churches and fortresses from the medieval times. The capital, Tbilisi, is home to the ancient Narikala fortress, which is the Persian name for "inaccessible fortress," was built in the fourth century and stood up to long centuries of invasion. The Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, built in the 11th century, and the Jvari church, built in the sixth century, are both located in Mtskheta, which was the ancient Georgian capital. The Bagrati Cathedral and the Gelati Cloister, two of Georgia's most important architectural monuments, boast their splendor in the city of Kutaisi and are great examples of stone carvings and mural paintings. Although 80 percent of the country is covered by mountains, it has beautiful semi-tropical beaches lined with palm and eucalyptus trees along the Black Sea coast that rival beaches in Eurasia.

One cannot say he or she has experienced this country until he or she has tried at least a few of Georgia's many flavorful traditional dishes and wines. A mixture of meat, cheese, greens and spices are the ingredients to the delicious dumplings called khinkali. Pkhali, spinach leaves mixed with various spices; shashlik, lamb shish kebab; and churchkhela, a sweet walnut dessert cut into rolls, are just a few more saliva-inducing typical Georgian foods. Wine is also a major Georgian tradition and history. Archaeologists and historians have found grape stones and vessels over 7,000 years old, making Georgia the believed homeland of wine. Millenniums of experience and about 500 types of grapevines make Georgia home to some of the world's most renowned wines.

When asked what he misses most about his country, Georgian Army Lt. George Dumbadze said, "I miss Georgian cuisine and especially the wine. But most of all, I miss attending Orthodox services."

Georgia — yet another piece of the Multi-National Force - Iraq puzzle dedicated to rebuilding Iraq.



References: www.cia.gov, www.lonelyplanet.com, www.gws.ge, www.suite101.com, <http://travelgeorgia.gol.ge>, www.gcof.org, www.virtualtourist.com, www.great-adventures.com.

Coalition Corner is compiled by Sgt. Misha King, assistant editor, scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil.

CHAPLAIN'S TALK

Observations of a "New Guy"

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.)

Guy E. Glad

Multi-National Force - Iraq
Strategic Operations

I was born and raised in Racine, Wisc., and am an avid Green Bay Packers fan. If you cut me, I bleed Packer green and gold. As a Wisconsin native, I hate hot weather. So, when I received orders to move out to Iraq, I was a bit concerned. Although excited about this opportunity, I realized that I'd be coming to a region of the world that was famous for heat; I hate heat. Arabic is the regional language; I don't speak Arabic. I was deploying as an individual replacement coming from Fort Carson, Colo., which is where my family and many of my friends reside; none of my family members or friends are in Iraq.

Needless to say, I was a bit concerned about what the next 12 months had in store for me. I've been here for a month now, and things are looking up. I'm getting used to the heat. I'm learning Arabic. And I've met a number of great people who I'm working with and developing friendships. One day I began to think about EXACTLY where I was: Iraq, aka Mesopotamia. Hmmm ... I thought. The Bible has a lot to say about this region of the world. As a matter of fact, I reflected, many

important biblical events took place in and around this region, which is one of the most important geographical locations throughout biblical history:

*Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were located to the south

between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

*Noah lived in the area, and it is here that he built the Ark.

*Job was from the area around Uz.

*Abraham was from Ur. God called him out of Ur and led him and his family to the Promised Land (Canaan; Israel).

*Assyrians from Nineveh conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.

*Chaldeans from Babylon conquered the southern kingdom of Judah and exiled the Hebrews to Babylon.

*The Tower of Babel was built by Nebuchadnezzar near Babylon.

*God commanded Jonah to preach repentance to the inhabitants of Nineveh. He did, but only after spending some time in the belly of a really big fish! This is really great, I thought!

Not only are we in the center of



Chaplain Glad

biblical history, but we are also making history at the same time. So God really does work all things out for our good (Romans 8). After thinking about all of these things, God reminded me (again) that He

has a purpose for our lives. His great promise in Jeremiah 29:11 gives great comfort. Here he declares, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

So we have hope and can be comforted by that wonderful biblical truth that God loves each one of us in good times as well as bad times. He has a very special plan for our lives and loves us so much that He desires a personal relationship with us through faith in Christ (John 3:16).

Even though I've only been here for a short time, I'm no longer the "new guy," and I'm excited about the next 11 months. I'm excited to see how God works in and around us. I'm excited about new friends and how all of us together will be a part of making history smack dab in the center of a land that has been so central to biblical history!

NEWS IN BRIEF

Coalition kills 70 terrorists near Ramadi

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, AR RAMADI, Iraq — Coalition Forces continued counter-terrorism operations in areas of Al Anbar Province Oct. 16, killing an estimated 70 terrorists in separate actions.

Coalition Forces conducted an air strike against a group of terrorists attempting to emplace an improvised explosive device east of Ramadi.

While conducting a combat air patrol, crewmembers from an F-15 observed 20 men arrive in four vehicles at the crater site of a previously-detonated IED which had killed five U.S. and two Iraqi Soldiers Oct. 15. The terrorists were in the process of emplacing another IED in the same spot when the F-15 engaged them with a precision-guided bomb, resulting in the death of terrorists on the ground.

At approximately 7:30 p.m., a UH-1N Huey and AH-1W Cobra helicopter team on patrol north of Ramadi had been observing a group of military age males gathered at a suspected terrorist safe house. After realizing their position had been compromised, the terrorists fled the scene and engaged the Cobra with small arms fire. The Cobra returned fire with 20-mm munitions, resulting in the death of an estimated 10 terrorists. At approximately 7:50 p.m., a team of FA-18s resumed observa-

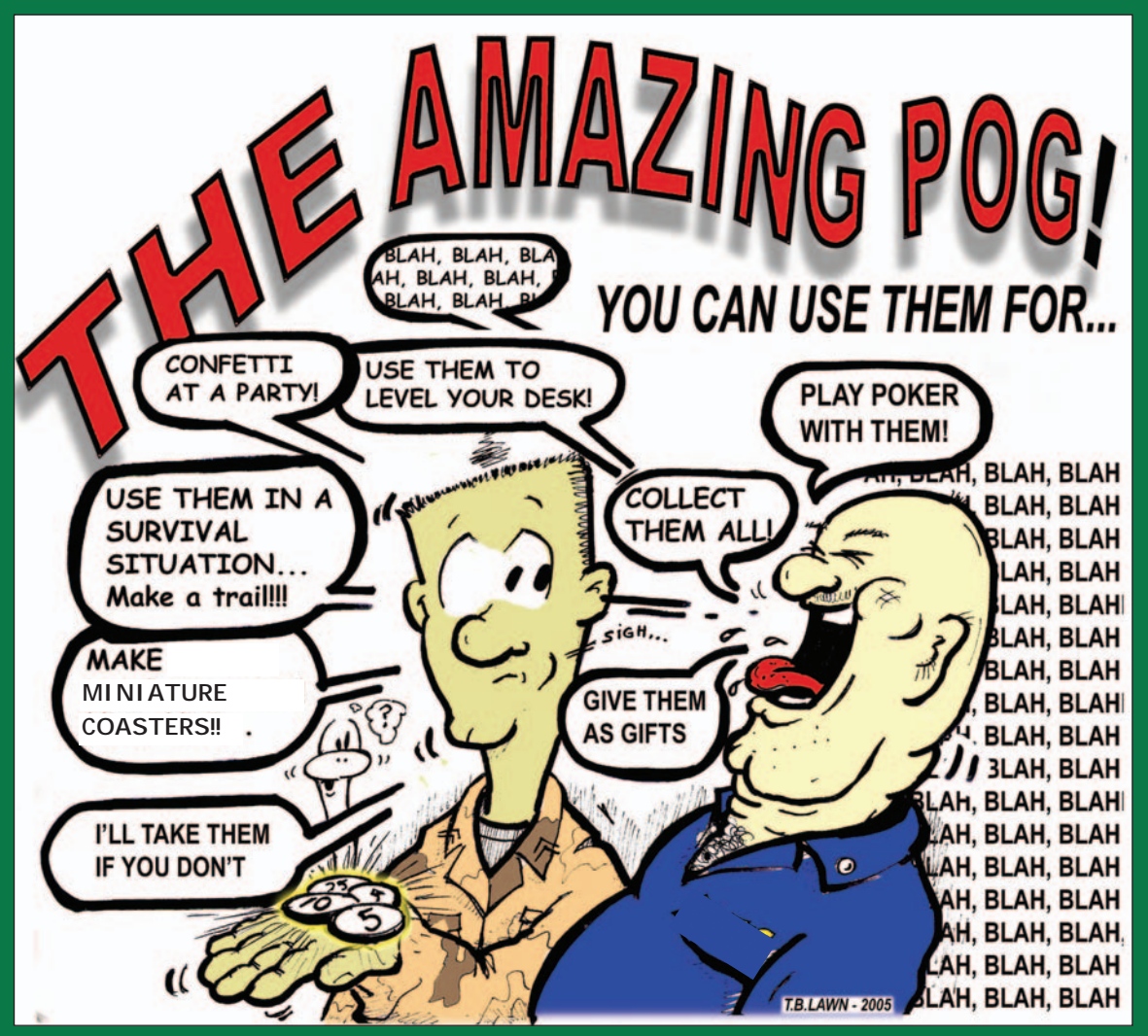
tion at the suspected safe house where they found an additional 35-40 terrorists loading their vehicles with weapons and driving to another location to unload the weapons. The FA-18 targeted the terrorists with a precision-guided bomb, killing terrorists on the ground. The combined strikes resulted in approximately 50 terrorists killed.

The strikes took place in the Abu Faraj region, north of Ramadi, where a large number of indirect fire and IED attacks against civilians, Iraqi infrastructure, Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces have originated.

At approximately 8:00 p.m., Coalition Forces guarding the Government Center in Ramadi were attacked by a small-arms fire attack from multiple locations within an adjacent building. After requesting air support to neutralize the increasing volume of fire, an FA-18 engaged the target with a Maverick missile at approximately 8:50 p.m. When the small arms fire continued, Coalition forces engaged the targets with two shoulder mounted multipurpose assault weapons, resulting in the cessation of all movement from within the structure. An estimated one to three terrorists were killed in the strike.

All the attacks were timed and executed in a manner to reduce the possibility of collateral damage. There were no reports of Coalition or civilian casualties.


Scimitar Slapstick



Art by Staff Sgt. Timothy B. Lawn




Art by Maj. James D. Crabtree



Guidons, Guidons, Guidons ...

Net Call for all Norwich University graduates in the AOR! Please contact: Lt. Col. Basheer Ilyas (NU '88) or Maj. Tom Simons (NU '92) at DSN 318-822-2160/2280 or thomas.simons@iraq.centcom.mil



Art and comic submissions are welcome!
Please send to the *Scimitar* for consideration at:
scimitar@iraq.centcom.mil

Hoaxes are a real threat.

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IEDs KILL

Worship and Prayer Schedule for the International Zone

All services at the Community Center Chapel unless otherwise noted

For more information, call DSN 318-239-8659

Sunday

9 a.m. — IZ Gospel Service (PCO annex classroom)
9:30 a.m. — Choir Rehearsal
10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (Camp Prosperity)
10:30 a.m. — General Christian Worship
Noon — Episcopal/Lutheran/Anglican
2 p.m. — Latter Day Saints
4 p.m. — Catholic Confession
4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass

Monday-Thursday

Noon — Catholic Mass (Mon.-Thurs.)
6 p.m. — Catholic Adult Educaion (Tue.)
8 p.m. — Bible Study (Mon.-Thurs.)

Friday

9 a.m. — Catholic Choir Rehearsal
11 a.m. — Bible Study
Noon — Catholic Communion Service
5:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass (FOB Steel Dragon)

6 p.m. — Jewish Shabbat Services
8 p.m. — Orthodox Fellowship
8 p.m. — Women's Fellowship (Chapel Classroom)

Saturday

9 a.m. — 7th Day Adventist School (CSH)
9 a.m. — 7th Day Adventist Service (CSH)
10 a.m. — Catholic Mass (CSH)
12:30 p.m. — Buddhist Prayer
4 p.m. — Catholic Confession

4:30 p.m. — Catholic Mass
6 p.m. — Choir Practice
6:30 p.m. — Community Center Service Rehearsal
8 p.m. — Alpha Course

Daily Islamic Prayer

See schedules posted at prayer locations.

Camp Taji, Chicago marathons boost morale, competition

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Tad Browning
3rd Infantry Division
Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq — Hours after the Chicago Marathon was over, more than 100 people could still be seen running by the dim glow of green chemical lights that paved their way as they competed in the Camp Taji Marathon here Oct. 9.

The Camp Taji Marathon, held in conjunction with the 28th LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon, added 114 entries to the total of over 40,000 runners who committed themselves to running 26.2 miles.

Soldiers and civilians took a break from their combat roles and jobs to meet the challenge of running a marathon in the still of the night down gravel and pothole-filled roads. The race began at 10 p.m. with the sound of an explosion from a controlled detonation that had runners making four laps around a 10-kilometer track that wound through the streets of Camp Taji, north of Baghdad.

1st Sgt. Roger Nickel, a leader assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment (Assault Helicopter), came up with the idea of hosting a marathon to help build morale and give Soldiers and civilians the opportunity to compete.

"The marathon included people as far away as Kuwait, some foreign Soldiers, a lieutenant colonel from the Australian Army, Air Force personnel and a lot of people from Baghdad," said Nickel.

This was Nickel's 13th marathon and his first attempt at organizing one. After helping the 46th Corps Support Group set up a half

marathon at the start of the deployment in Iraq, Nickel and seven other Soldiers trained and did a marathon in August.

"It was really hot, and we didn't want to open it up to a lot of people; it was like a trial run to see how we wanted to do things," Nickel said. A lot of the preparation leading up to this event came from Nickel's participation in a triathlon in Balad, which prompted him to organize and set up a triathlon for the Soldiers on Camp Taji. "I used the Sgt. Audie Murphy Club, and we put together the triathlon. It was very successful and went very, very well," Nickel said. "The culmination of everything was this event, and when it started, we figured we would have somewhere around 40 people. Overall, we had about 114 start, which exceeded anything anybody expected."

As with any competition, some came for the mental and physical challenge, and others came for personal reasons that went far beyond the boundaries of the military base. Nickel, a Saginaw, Mich., native, said a lot of his motivation came from his wife Sara and four kids: Garrett, Kyleigh, Devyn and McKenzie. He ran this marathon in remembrance of five fellow Soldiers killed in Somalia and a fellow runner that died here in an attack in September.

Heather Ann Simas, an office management specialist at the U.S. Embassy, recalls hearing about the event at the Army Ten-Miler in Baghdad. "I went to run the ten-miler and this crazy guy jumped up and said, 'Hey, we're running a marathon next weekend,' and so I said, 'Sign me up, I'll be there!'"

Participating in her tenth marathon, Simas, a State Department employee who calls Springfield, Mo., home, has been working the last several years overseas and likes to meet

new challenges. "Well, I've climbed Kilimanjaro — I climbed it because it was there; I needed to tackle it. I run marathons because I love to run for one thing, and it's just that it's a tough distance, and I like to be able to win ... that competitive edge."

Running in his first marathon, 45-year-old Sgt. First Class Kenneth Hopkins, Headquarters Supply Company, 603rd Aviation Support Battalion, said his motivation was just to see if he could do it. "I really wanted to see if I could do it; finishing it was my goal, not to win it ... and that's my achievement, too! The time is unimportant; it was just the finishing." Hopkins recalled how he felt during the race.

"When you start, you're all pumped up. Hey, I'm going to finish it. Midway, little doubts start creeping into your head,



Participants take their first few strides at the start of the Camp Taji Marathon.

but after the third [lap], you know you're going to make it! There is no turning back."

Because of security concerns, the event was not announced until almost the last minute, which gave most of the runners little or no time to train for the marathon.

Capt. Matthew S. Smith, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 9th Division Iraqi Army Military Transition Team, who finished first place overall with a time of 3:09:37, said he was busy running missions and did not get the time to run as much as he wanted.

"I was able to get in two long runs with two other MiTT team advisors and kind of winged it from there." The Woodbridge, Va., Soldier worked the day of the event and then was still able to come out and finish the marathon at just past 1:00 a.m. "One of the biggest obstacles was running at night. I didn't know how my body was going to react after a long day at work," he said.

Simas said she had only about a week's notice, but with her averaging 40 to 45 miles a week, she was ready for the challenge of the run.

Track conditions and having to run at night proved to be one of the obstacles runners had to overcome. "I wanted a 3:50:00," Simas said,

"but I wasn't going to complain — it was some really rugged terrain out there, a lot of gravel and a lot of broken spots. This is one of the toughest ones I've ever run because of the terrain, but it was pretty neat."

One runner, 1st Sgt. James Smith, HHC, Avn. Bde., said he was running his fourth and final lap when a MEDEVAC helicopter came down and sandblasted him as he ran past the airfield.

While people were still running at Camp Taji, two Soldiers and a couple of family members were surely nursing their wounds from the Chicago Marathon. Capt. Lori Ankabrandt, HHC, Avn. Bde., finished in 4 hours and 9 minutes, and Capt. Kyle Carone, 46th CSG finished in 3 hours and 59 minutes. Nickel's 64-year-old dad, John, completed his third

marathon in 4 hours, 28 minutes and 28 seconds, with his aunt Mary coming in just

three seconds ahead to complete her first marathon.

As the roads cleared of runners, many of them were proud and happy with the way things turned out. "It was great thanks to the [people of the] Avn. Bde.,

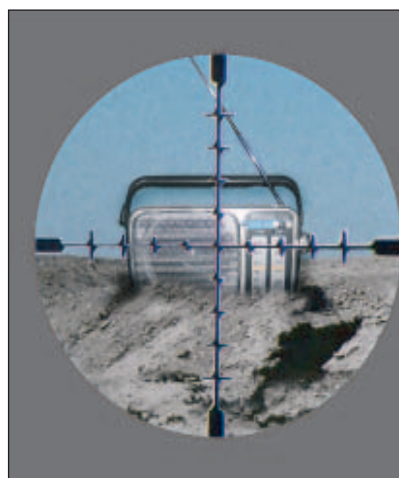
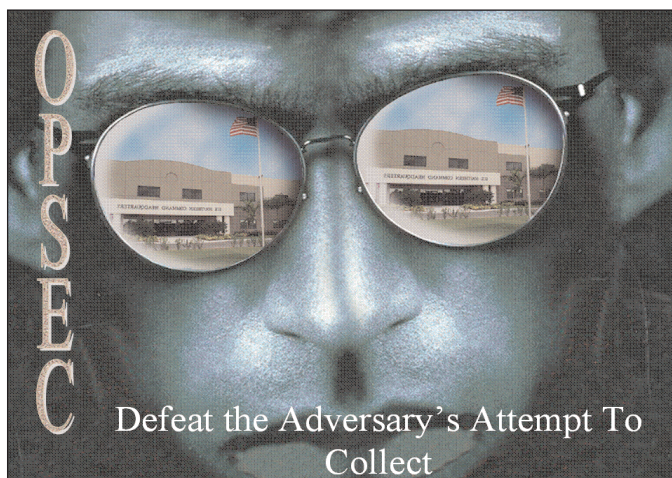
who put on the event. Thanks to the LaSalle Bank and everyone back in Chicago and all of the support at Taji," said Capt. Smith. "All of the water stations ... a fantastic race ... you couldn't ask for more."



Participants take off running at the start of the Camp Taji Marathon, which was held in conjunction with a Chicago-based race.



Capt. Matthew Smith, 2nd Bn., 2nd Bde., 9th Iraqi Army MiTT, checks his time after finishing first in the Camp Taji Marathon.



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